

## Rector's Report Dec 2013

It has been a while since I produced one of these and it's been a month since I have returned from Sabbatical. In the event I did not meet the academic half of my objectives for my sabbatical, I did however have some astonishing encounters with God. I also – as one always does at times such as those – discovered some things about myself that were sobering but having embraced them, I feel better for it. The one thing that kept erupting in my head was distraction and the need to identify distraction and to discard it and return to vision – the God-given vision as opposed to the easy vision we think up and follow.

I am not sure what exactly these respective visions are but the God-given vision is hard to achieve if we are self made and self reliant and if we are not gift-focussed. Peter Block is clear that the gifts that are assembled determine the agenda. That simple statement requires a huge paradigm shift. As we design vision presently we end up with a host of challenges and problems but hardly any wherewithal to deal with them. Block is more spiritual: God, through God's distribution of gifts, designs the agenda and the vision. This somehow is the only approach in strategy that makes sense. But as I have said earlier on, it requires a paradigm shift.

The God given vision really has us boxing with one hand tied behind our backs- in other words we operate in the zone of vulnerability where we have to turn to God daily; even moment by moment. In the body of Christ the quest is not to become so good at something that you do it with your eyes closed and "with no hands". The goal is constantly to stay in the God lane – like a sail boat that is wind powered we are to be powered by God and not ourselves. Reflect on this and see what it means for you. Effectiveness in contribution begins here.

So why are we here – this gathering of the faithful in All Saints church in Fourways given its uniqueness demographically and spiritually; given the uniqueness of its needs? Well I don't know and that brings me to my next point: Collaboration. The Kingdom is a collaborative collective. That means that we struggle continually with our context and with what God wills for the context. It means we don't come with agendas, we determine agendas collaboratively; together. Some of us are determined to recreate some mythical past church ignoring context and its needs. God is creating a new emerging church in the world and we have plug into that movement – a movement that is looking around at the reality and the challenges and responding to them creatively (which incidentally is my next point) Movements that look backwards die. The history of the church is instructive in this regard. The church itself is a radical departure from the religious movements of the day. In fact it came to be seen as the third way - not Jewish and not Roman – something new steeped in compassion and forgiveness and resurrection and a restoration of human dignity to all. That is what we inherited and that is the prism through which we must focus all our efforts: do they really seek to do all the above in a new and meaningful way.

All this serves as a preamble to what I want to suggest as our theme for the coming year. I personally have two key objectives for the medium to long-term. I am committed to growing each of you into the fullness and stature of Christ and secondly we need to urgently build a school in this place because there is no land and there are no schools for the children of Fourways who cannot afford private education and because children are why we exist.

I believe that because I have prayed, reflected, spoken to and consulted God and God's people widely. Also, it is clear that reconciliation remains the key challenge of our society and must be on the agenda for the foreseeable future. All of these projects are huge in their own right but can only come to fruition when they are underpinned by prayer. I am inspired by the idea that we need to begin something so big that it can only succeed if God is at its centre. How do we do that? We humble ourselves and pray. I want to suggest that we pray for one whole year but not just pray to also collaborate on designing a mission which takes into account our unique family in and outside of the church. So the theme if you accept it would be: A Year of Prayer for Mission 2015.

The collaboration if we do it correctly will be what grows us as a parish because we are going to have to struggle with each other and God to get to where God wants us to be and ultimately do. It cannot be a mission as we know it. The people we hope to reach won't understand it. So we have to work closely with God and each other and be creative and open to having our minds changed following a new paradigm for mission. – you really don't think that Jesus' methodology followed any past method of mission - It was radically new! And ours must be too.

So I give you this dream. If you can embrace it and bring it to fruition in the power of the Holy Spirit then God's Kingdom will be advanced ever so slightly.

God be with you all

Love  
Michael